

Handbook To Support Work-Based Projects Using Work-Based Learning Levels 4 To 7.

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Introduction to the Work-Based Learning Project Module

This module is about work-based projects undertaken as part of a programme of work-based learning supported by the University of Hull. This module is designed to help you to think about the design, implementation and reporting of your project.

This Handbook describes 9 Learning Tasks that you should complete in sequence in order to give yourself the best opportunity to successfully complete the Project module. Please note that as most of your time will be taken up with the project activity and writing it up it is important that you complete learning tasks 1 to 6 as quickly as possible and in no longer than two weeks.

Learning outcomes and assessment

To complete the module successfully your work should demonstrate the learning outcomes for the module. You can find the learning outcomes for the Project modules at academic levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 at Appendix 1 of this handbook. If you are not clear which learning outcomes apply to the module you are taking you should check with your module leader.

Assessment is an integral part of the learning process and this module is assessed through the submission of coursework. Assessment is either “formative” or “summative”. Formative assessment is when you receive feedback whilst you are completing the module and is intended to show you where you need to improve as well as show you what you are doing well. Summative assessment is the final formal assessment of your learning achievement against the expected learning outcomes of the module.

Assessment Requirements

Formative Assessment is given on a draft Project.

Summative assessment for the module is based upon the final version of your Project.



What do we mean by “Work-Based Project”?

A work-based project is an individual or collaborative activity that is carefully planned to achieve a particular aim. Your work-based learning programme is likely to include at least one and possibly more than one major work-based project. The work-based project is an important part of a work-based learning programme as it gives you the opportunity to systematically find out about a real life work issue and produce a report or other outcomes of relevance to you and your employer/ or other work stakeholder.

Example work-based projects include:

- 1) The development of revised procedures to improve the standard of the reporting of construction defects by construction site managers.
- 2) A report making recommendations to improve the safety of firefighters entering hostile urban areas.
- 3) A survey of staff at a Company to assess the readiness of the Company to implement the Investors in People standard.

Choosing a work-based project

In a work-based programme you have a lot of freedom to develop a programme which is meaningful to you and your work. This is particularly important when considering the development of a work-based project as the outcomes of the project should not just be of interest to you and provide evidence of your academic ability they should also be of at least potential interest to your employer or other interested work stakeholder (eg a client if you are self-employed). The need to develop a project of interest and relevance to your work will require you to discuss your potential project area with others in your area of work who may be affected by your project.

When considering possible project areas you should carefully consider the following ten point check list:

1. What do you want your project to achieve?
2. What is the potential for impact on the organisation of the project activity as well as the project outcome?
3. What difference does it make that it is YOU undertaking the project?
4. What knowledge and skills do you need to carry out the project? If you do not already have these abilities how will you gain them?
5. Who else is involved? What is in it for those stakeholders? Are they fully informed? Are they active participants?
6. What help do you need from others and why would they want to help you?
7. Are there individuals or groups which may see your project as threatening? If so, how are you going to deal with this?
8. If your project is to have significance for your organisation do you have to convince key “decision makers”? If so, what sort of case do you need to put forward? What is the decision making process?
9. How might the knowledge you have created be used/disseminated and updated when your project is finished?
10. Is the project feasible within the timescale and with the resources available to you and how will the timescale relate to the University of Hull module requirements?

Learning Task 1

If you have not already identified your work-based project then think of at least two project areas related to your work which you would be interested in making part of your work-based learning programme. For each project area make notes for it against the ten point check list above. If you have already identified your project area then use the ten point check list to review your chosen project area.

Example use of the ten point check list by Martin a Police accident investigator

- 1) Martin believes on the basis of his experience and discussions with colleagues that training of police officers to investigate road traffic accidents could be improved and he want to use his work- based learning project to gather evidence to support the case for change to his employers.
- 2) The potential impact would be a significant change to training procedures within his organization and would be likely to result in the development of new training courses for police service personnel.
- 3) Martin has five years experience in the police service and has been a trainer in the service for three years. It is part of his current work role to plan and deliver training courses.
- 4) Martin already has a good understanding of training and of road traffic accident issues. He currently does not have knowledge or experience of research and he believes he will need to put together a credible research base in order to make a convincing case to his manager that major change to existing practice is needed. He has discussed this with his University tutor and decided to include a course unit in research methods as part of his negotiated work- based programme.
- 5) Martin plans to collect data from fellow officers who participate in courses that he currently delivers. This will require the permission of his employer and the consent of those course participants who take part. Martin will need to consider the ethical position of asking his own students to participate in his study in this way and build in specific safeguards.
- 6) Martin needs to convince the Police service to allow him to undertake this research and is dependent upon his fellow police officers to provide him with information. He believes that there is a willingness to do this but he will have to make clear exactly what commitment he is seeking from others.
- 7) Martin is seeking to make the case for change to established courses and realizes that it is unlikely that his employer will agree to do this unless there is compelling evidence of the need and feasibility of change.
- 8) The first key decision maker that Martin must influence is his immediate line manager in order to get approval to undertake the project. Ultimately he knows that for major change to be implemented in the organisation he must make a convincing case to the committee with responsibility for learning and development in his organisation.
- 9) Martin knows that he can use existing procedures to produce and disseminate any new course that might arise from his project.
- 10) Martin has calculated that he will need to ask for support in distributing and collecting the questionnaire to fellow officers. He constructed a timeline for the major stages of his project which suggests it can be accomplished in three months

Work-Based Projects and Research

Your work- based project as a form of research activity for the purposes of work. In essence research is best understood as a planned and systematic activity which provides reliable ways of finding out about and deepening your understanding of a particular work-based issue.

We come across research or the outcomes of research in many forms in our everyday lives. For example market research to inform the development of a new product or using a product which has been tested in a lab. If you have already completed a designing practitioner enquiry module as part of your work-based programme then regard this section as a revision exercise as you will have already developed a detailed research proposal.

Learning Task 2

Watch the following short introduction to research and make a note of the main elements of research:

'What is Research' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Og4BGyZr_Nk

Because your research is an integral part of a work- based project it is often referred to as practitioner inquiry or insider research. Practitioner inquiry is a form of applied research that is undertaken by professionals/practitioners within work contexts that is intended to be of direct relevance to work.

The position of being a practitioner undertaking research in your own organisation/your own professional area.

As a Practitioner carrying out practitioner inquiry you are likely to have a dual role as both a worker and an inquirer/ researcher. The influences brought to bear upon you by this dual role make it important that you develop a high level of reflection upon the design and conduct of your work- based project. For example it is important to be aware of your own role(s) and position within the work environment.

Reflection and research

When we use reflection as part of the work-based research process we are actually seeking to make a change, by using subjective and objective data from experience, to plan and decide actions. Reflecting does not have to be a solitary internal activity. A valuable way of guarding against personal bias or subjectivity is to reflect with someone else who has been through the same or similar experience. Think carefully who would be a good person to talk to about the event you are reflecting upon.

Lawrence-Wilkes (2014) proposes stages for reflective practice which fit the word "REFLECT":

1. Remember - Look back, review.
2. Experience - What happened? What was important?
3. Focus - Who, what, where. Roles, responsibilities?
4. Learn - Question: why, reasons, perspectives, feelings? Refer to external checks.
5. Evaluate - Causes, outcomes, strengths, weaknesses, feelings
6. Consider - Assess options, need/possibilities for change? Development needs?
7. Trial - Integrate new ideas, experiment, take action, make change. (Repeat cycle)

Learning Task 3

Learning Task 3. Read chapter 3 of:

Costley, C., Elliot, G.C. and Gibbs, P. (2010) Doing Work Based Research: Approaches to Enquiry for Insider- Researchers. London: Sage.

and take notes on the ethical considerations of being an insider researcher.

Being an insider may offer particular opportunities for certain inquiry/research approaches. Case study and action research are often highly applicable methodologies to consider if you are an insider- researcher.

Learning Task 4

Learning Task 4. If you have not already decided upon your research methodology then watch the following videos and decide whether case study or action research might be appropriate for use in your project. If you have already decided to use action research or case study then watch the relevant video as revision. If you have already decided not to use action research or case study you may choose not to do this task.

For more information about case study see:

'Types of Case Study. Part 1 of 3 on Case Studies' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQfoq7c4UE4>

For more information about Action Research see:

"Action Research" with Ashridge Business School's Simon Standish, Gill Coleman & Danny Chesterman' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96aM9OgSauM>

Your Work-Based Project

Your work based project will normally be divided into four key stages:

- 1. Planning**
- 2. Implementation**
- 3. Outcomes**
- 4. Review**

Learning Task 5

Read: Workman B and Nottingham P (2015) Work-based projects, in Helyer R (Ed.) (2015) The Work-Based Learning Student Handbook, 2nd Edition. London: Palgrave, and take notes on aspects that you think may be relevant to designing, writing and evaluating your project

Planning your Work-Based Project

It is important that you develop a project plan which identifies:

- The focus and rationale for your project
- The aims and objectives of what you want to achieve
- If there are specific questions that you want to address
- The information or data you need to gather
- The resources and support available to you
- Permissions required to access information
- The project outcomes and / or product
- The time frame within which this must be achieved

While these items form the core of the project there are other things that you need to consider:

- The context in which you work and how it may influence the project
- Who you will need permission from to undertake the project – are there ethical issues you need to seek clearance for from others?
- Your role as an insider
- Any ethical considerations relating to gathering, storing and using information or accessing data?

The 'Implementation' Stage

This is the stage when you have started your project. The following are key questions that you need to address at this stage:

- What do others say about the area of your project? – This requires an exploration and reading of supporting literature e.g. government policies. Consider how this might inform your thinking about the project, what questions you need to ask, how you might approach it.
- What sort of information are you collecting? – This refers to the variety of data you may be collecting which can be primary data from individuals, but may also include contextual information.
- How are you collecting your data and what is your justification for doing it this way? – For example you might be gathering data through interviews and/or questionnaires, but you might also be able to collect data from websites or practitioners working in a similar context elsewhere in the country.
- Do you have access to the data you need? If not, who has? – if you need to use data from your organisation you may need to get permission to do so or ethical permission in some sectors such as in health or education.
- How will you be ethical in your approach? – consider how you will ensure how the people who supply you with information (your informants) are able to make informed choices about their contribution to your project, how you will preserve confidentiality of people and recorded data. What ethical issues may be involved such as whose intellectual property to outcome will be, or whether there are business implications.
- Are you getting what you need from your data collection? – is your project activity getting you the data that you need in order to address the aims and objectives of your project? You may find that there is information that you had not previously anticipated as being important and it is important to be able to focus on emerging issues as your project develops.
- How will I manage the data? Think in advance about how you will record and analyse the data you collect. Bear in mind both the work-based audience for your project work and the academic requirements of the University.

The 'Outcomes' stage

Important questions at this stage are:

- How will you make sense of the data you have collected? – be systematic in how you order your findings. Develop a system for comparing and contrasting your data. Organise your thoughts and write notes to yourself. Align your findings with the aims and objectives of your project.
- How do you present your project? – you should have some idea before you get to this stage of what form the final project will take eg project report, portfolio of evidence and commentary, product and commentary. Consult your work based colleagues and your university tutor as to how to present your product if necessary. It is essential to include selected evidence from your investigation in a way that shows how you came to your conclusions.
- How do you share your project findings? – as this is a work based project your colleagues are likely to have been involved and are likely to be interested in your project outcomes. Think about opportunities to share this information at work.

The 'Review' Stage

This is the point when the main project activity has finished and it is important to reflect upon the project as a whole and ask yourself the following questions:

- To what extent were the objectives of the project met, what were the barriers and the things that helped you to achieve the aims?
- To what extent were you able to implement your project?
- What worked well?
- What you might do differently next time?
- What have you learnt from undertaking the project and how might you use this new understanding in the future?



Different Ways of presenting your project

This section suggests some different ways of presenting your project.

Project Report Format

If your project results in one written final project report the suggested format is:

Title page

Title of Project , your name, student number, module code, month and year of submission Project keywords

Contents page

This is usually written last when you are happy with the structure of the report.

Project Abstract

This is a summary of the project explaining in outline what the project is about, how it was carried out and identifying the main project outcomes.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This is where you provide the context to the project. You should identify your work context, and explain why the main theme of your project is important to this work context.

Chapter 2: Project Aims and objectives

Identify the main aim of your project and identify the objectives that you need to address in order to achieve your project aim. The aims and objectives indicate what you are exploring in your project and what overarching questions you will address. If you are carrying out a research project you should include a research statement and identify the research questions which you as the practitioner researcher must address in order to deliver upon the aims and objectives of your work- based project.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Describe and justify your choice of how you have approached your project, identify and justify your chosen research approach and data collection techniques. You should also discuss your role as a practitioner researcher and explore the advantages/disadvantages of this role.

An important part of this chapter is to identify how you have systematically reached and used literature relevant to your project. This might be conventional books or journal articles but will also include a range of work- based sources of information such as professional journals, magazines, company publications.

If you have already developed a Project proposal in which you identified an approach and data collection techniques, you will be able to draft this chapter at an early stage. You should critically reflect on the methodology you have used and include a discussion of why you have chosen the particular approach and techniques. Include how you will deal with issues of a confidential or ethical nature.

You will need to revisit this chapter when you have completed your project as some of your initial plans may have changed.

Chapter 4: Project activity

Describe and evaluate the actions you took in order to carry out your project. What helped or hindered the activities? Avoid just recounting what you did stand back and reflect upon what you did and try to explain what worked well and why and what might have been improved. Keeping a reflective diary will help you with this process.

Chapter 5: Project findings

Present your results with a full discussion and your interpretation. It is important to analyse your findings and explain how they relate to your work context. This is a very important chapter and is likely to be the longest.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

First go back to the aims and objectives of your project as laid out in chapter 2 and say whether or not, or the extent to which you have achieved these. Any recommendations you make must be clearly linked to your conclusions and based upon your project findings. You should make clear who the intended audiences are for the different recommendations and whether the recommendations are for action in the short, medium or long term.

References

All references must be presented using the referencing style identified by your School at the University of Hull. The list of references at the end of your report must include detailed information on all the sources referred to in your report.

Product with Critical Commentary

One way of meeting the requirements for a work based project is to submit a "product" eg procedural handbook, business plan, artefact and a critical commentary aimed at the University which explains the purpose of the product, how it was developed and how it will be used.

Suggested structure for the Critical Commentary

Chapter 1: Introduction

Give the work context and your position. What was the background to the creation of the product, what need/ opportunity was the product a response to?

Chapter 2: Terms of reference

What was the specific aim of the product, what objectives did you have to address in order to produce the product?

Chapter 3: Product Development

How was the product developed? What research and development activity underpinned the creation of the product? What was your role, how did the product development draw upon/extend your knowledge and skills? What resources were involved?

Chapter 4: Use of the product

If the project includes a pilot or actual use of the product how has the use been planned how has feedback been received and how has it been evaluated? If changes have been made what are they and why are they required?

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

What is the outcome of your evaluation of the product and how will it inform future use/revision of the product? Reflect upon your personal and professional learning from the development and use of the product you have created.

This approach enables an artefact or product to be produced as part of your project, which is submitted with a critical commentary explaining the work context and the need for the product.

Project Portfolio

You can also demonstrate your project learning achievement by the submission of a portfolio of evidence and a critical commentary upon the evidence. You can also use this approach to collect a number of learning activities together to meet the learning outcomes of the project module.

The evidence might be a related chain of evidence arising from development at work. For example a performing artist might include in their portfolio a a performance plan, photographs or links to a video clip of the performance and a reflective evaluation of the performance. A manager developing new operational procedures might include examples of the original procedures, notes of the research to establish comparable procedures ast other companies, notes of consultation carried out inside the company,

the revised procedures and discussion of the process by which they were approved.

When presenting a portfolio it is vital that you clearly explain the significance of the evidence you have chosen to include in the portfolio. Remember it is the quality of the evidence rather than the quantity that counts.

The commentary on the evidence should make clear:

- Relevant background information explaining the context of the project.
- The purpose of the project and how the evidence illustrates the achievement of that purpose.
- What role you played in the production of the evidence?
- What development or research work was involved in the project?
- What were the project outcomes and how were they applied to your work?
- Any wider implications for your area of work?

Learning Task 6

Review the three suggested ways of presenting a work-based project described above. Identify which you think will be most appropriate for you project.

Learning Task 7

Draft the introduction and aims/terms of reference to your project and send it to your academic adviser for feedback (carry on with your project while you are waiting for feedback).

Learning Task 8

Produce a full draft of your project, including any revisions in the light of feedback on the first sections, and submit it to your academic adviser for feedback.

Learning Task 9

Produce a final version of your project (taking into account feedback received). Check it carefully for spelling, accuracy, attention to ethical considerations and to ensure you have not accidentally committed plagiarism and then submit it for formal assessment.

Bibliography & resources

Bibliography

Costley, C., Elliot, G.C. and Gibbs, P. (2010) Doing Work Based Research: Approaches to Enquiry for Insider-Researchers. London: Sage.

Workman B and Nottingham P (2015) Work-based projects, in Helyer R (Ed.) (2015) The Work-Based Learning Student Handbook, 2nd Edition. London: Palgrave,

Recommended texts on research methodology

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2010) Research Methods in Education. 6th ed. London: Routledge.

Robson, R. (2011) Real world research, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Saunders, M, Thornhill, P, Lewis, P, McMillan, K, Wevers, J, (2012) Research Methods for Business Students, 12th Edition

Yin R (2003), Case Study Research, 3rd edition, London, Sage.

On-line Resources

What is Research

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Og4BGyZr_Nk

For more information about case studies see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQfoq7c4UE4>

For more information about Action Research see:

"Action Research" with Ashridge Business School's Simon Standish, Gill Coleman & Danny Chesterman
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96aM9OgSauM>

Appendix 1

Level 4 to 7 Project Learning Outcomes

Level 4

20 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify and analyse sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an awareness of ethical principles and professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make an appropriate selection of data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Review how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select content, medium and style that is appropriate for a professional and /or academic communication. Evidence sources of information by referencing sources using a consistent style.

40 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify and analyse a range of sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an awareness of ethical principles and coherent application of professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make an appropriate selection of data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Review how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select appropriate content, medium and style for a professional and /or academic communication. Evidence a range of sources of information by referencing sources using a consistent style.

Level 5

20 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyse and synthesise sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an understanding of ethical principles and a systematic understanding and coherent application of professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make an appropriate selection of data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Reflect upon how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select appropriate content, medium and style that is concise and appropriate for a professional and /or academic communication. Evidence sources of information and demonstrate origins of ideas with by referencing sources using a consistent style.

40 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyse and synthesise a range of sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an understanding of ethical principles and a systematic understanding and coherent application of professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make an appropriate selection of approaches to the research methodology, data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Reflect upon how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select appropriate content, medium and style that is concise and appropriate for a professional and / or academic communication. Evidence a range of sources of information and demonstrate origins of ideas by referencing sources using a consistent style.

Level 6

20 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyse, synthesise and evaluate sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an indepth understanding of ethical principles and a systematic understanding and coherent application of professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make a reasoned selection of data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Critically reflect upon how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select appropriate content, medium and style that is clear, concise and appropriate for a range of professional and /or academic communication. Evidence sources of information and demonstrate origins of ideas with precision by referencing sources using a consistent style.

40 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyse, synthesise and evaluate a range of sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an indepth understanding of ethical principles and a systematic understanding and coherent application of professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make a reasoned selection of approaches to the research methodology, data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Critically reflect upon how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select appropriate content, medium and style that is clear, concise and appropriate for a range of professional and /or academic communication. Evidence a substantial range of sources of information and demonstrate origins of ideas with precision by referencing sources using a consistent style.



Level 7

20 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyse, synthesise and critically evaluate sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an indepth and critical understanding of ethical principles and a systematic understanding and coherent application of professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make a reasoned and critical selection of data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Critically reflect upon how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select appropriate content, medium and style that is clear, concise and persuasive for a range of professional and /or academic communication. Evidence sources of information and demonstrate origins of ideas with precision by referencing sources using a consistent style.

30 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyse, synthesise and critically evaluate sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an indepth and critical understanding of ethical principles and a systematic understanding and coherent application of professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make a reasoned and critical selection of data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Critically reflect upon how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select appropriate content, medium and style that is clear, concise and persuasive for a range of professional and /or academic communication. Evidence sources of information and demonstrate origins of ideas with precision by referencing sources using a consistent style.

40 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyse, synthesise and critically evaluate a range of sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an indepth and critical understanding of ethical principles and a systematic understanding and coherent application of professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make a reasoned and critical selection of approaches to the research methodology, data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Critically reflect upon how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select appropriate content, medium and style that is clear, concise and persuasive for a range of professional and /or academic communication. Evidence a substantial range of sources of information and demonstrate origins of ideas with precision by referencing sources using a consistent style.

60 credit Project

Module learning outcome description	
LO1	Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyse, synthesise and critically evaluate a wide range of sources of knowledge and evidence.
LO2	Demonstrate an indepth and critical understanding of ethical principles and a systematic understanding and coherent application of professional codes relevant to the WBL project.
LO3	Make a reasoned and critical selection of approaches to the research methodology, data collection techniques and data analysis and explain how these are appropriate to the aims and objectives of the WBL project.
LO4	Critically reflect upon how the WBL project has been planned and put into operation.
LO5	Select appropriate content, medium and style that is clear, concise and persuasive for a range of professional and /or academic communication. Evidence a substantial range of sources of information and demonstrate origins of ideas with precision by referencing sources using a consistent style.

